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## Original Research

# Perception of Farm Succession Planning among Rubber Farmers in Delta State, Nigeria

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**ABSTRACT:** The study investigated the perception of farm succession planning among rubber farmers in Delta State. A multi-stage sampling procedure was used to draw a sample size of 66 rubber farmers for the study. The data collection of the study was done using questionnaire. Data collected were analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation. The findings of the study showed that most of the rubber farmers in Delta State were males; 50% were married; 37.9% of the rubber farmers had 21-30 years of farming experience, but majority of rubber farmers had relatively low level of education. The results also revealed that rubber farmers have positive perceptions of farm succession planning. It was found that the factors that influence farm succession planning among rubber farmers in Delta State were the interest of a family member in the rubber farming business, the age of the rubber farmers, the availability of resources for succession planning, skills of rubber farming among family members, education level of rubber farmers, the need to prevent future generational conflicts in the family and rubber farming experience of the potential successor. Based on the findings, it was recommended, among others, that Delta State Government should use cooperative society, extension workers and contact farmers to educate rubber farmers on the need for succession planning.

**Keywords:** Perception, farm, succession planning and rubber farmers

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## INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is one of the major sectors of the economy that requires continuity for sustainable food security, poverty reduction and rural development in Nigeria. Prior to the oil boom, Nigeria's economy was based primarily on agriculture, which was concentrated in rural areas where farmers had access to both a plentiful supply of human resources and fertile acreage (Odjebor *et al.*, 2022). Rubber farming is one of the crucial subsectors of the agricultural sector in Nigeria. Rubber farming requires huge capital, hectares of land and infrastructures for

meaningful production. Raw materials for agro-based industries, foreign exchange, and employment opportunities are all provided by the rubber industry (NIPC, 2020). Delta State is one of the states in Nigeria that engage in rubber production.

Ageing is inevitable among rubber farmers in Delta State. The agricultural sector is where the effects of ageing, which reduces people's capacity to work and earn money, are most noticeable (Fasina and Inegbedion, 2014). As rubber farmers continue to age,

the need for retirement and transfer of farms to the next generation becomes necessary. Similarly, Johnson and Carlson (2020) stated that succession planning is crucial for ensuring a seamless transfer of land and assets to the next generation considering the ageing farming population worldwide.

The families that engage in rubber farming must have succession plans in place for replacements of aged ones in the face of eventualities such as retirement, death, or chronic illness. The retirement or unexpected death of key family member that engage in rubber farming activities can cause disrupt or end the family farm business without preparing others for the position. The failure to make success plan could lead to grave consequences of the closure of farming activities. One of the means to prepare vibrant family members to continue the rubber farming business in the case of unexpected situations is successive planning. Adeloye *et al.* (2022) pointed out that succession planning improves the transfer of an elderly farmer's holdings to a named possible heir at the time of retirement or death.

Farm succession planning is a systematic process and deliberate effort of aged farmers towards ensuring the continuity of rubber production by identifying and developing the skills of potential successors. In the same vein, according to (Arowolo *et al.*, 2017), farm succession planning has been characterized as the systematic process of locating, educating, and grooming possible successor(s) to assume ownership and management of the farm's assets. Succession planning which is the process of transferring ownership and management of farms to the next generation is a critical step for the sustainability and survival of the business (Rodriguez-Lizano *et al.*, 2020). Farm succession planning is an organized process of identifying, preparing, and grooming a potential successor(s) for future farm and asset management Ofuoku and Gbigbi, (2022).

There has been a persistent decline in rubber farming in the past decades in Delta State (Adebayo *et al.*, 2020). The decline in rubber farming could be attributed to the failure of aged farmers to develop plan for succession (Johnson *et al.*, 2020). Some aged farmers tend to rarely discuss and make plans for succession, probably due to the assumption that is associated with wishing themselves early death.

The fear of division by selecting and grooming a particular family member as a successor and many other reasons tend to make most aged farmers avoid the issue of succession unattended to before their retirement or demise/death (Adeloye *et al.*, 2022). Young people who identify as potential successors may take the decision not to engage in farming activities (Sappey *et al.*, 2012). This prompted this study to investigate the perceptions of farm succession planning among rubber farmers in Delta State.

## Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the perception of farm succession planning among rubber farmers in the study area?
2. What are the farm succession planning practices among rubber farmers in the study area?
3. What are the factors that influence farm succession planning among rubber farmers in Delta State?

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Study area

This study was carried out in Delta State, Nigeria. Delta State is an oil-producing state in Nigeria located in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The State lies within the tropics between longitude 5<sup>0</sup>.00 and 6<sup>0</sup>45<sup>0</sup>E and latitude 5<sup>0</sup>.00 and 6<sup>0</sup>.3<sup>0</sup>N. The State is predominating with Christians. The major ethnic groups in the State are Urhobo, Igbo, Izon, Isoko, Ijaw and Itsekiri. Delta State is in the South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria, with a population of 6,037,667 (3,079,210 males and 2,958,457 females) as of 2020 (NIPC, 2020). There are two different seasons of the typical tropical climate of the State, raining season is between March and November, while the dry season is between December and February. There are three types of soil in the area namely, alluvial, hydromorphic, and feral. Arable and permanent crops are cultivated in the various farming communities in the State. The vegetation of the area ranges from mangrove swamp to evergreen and savannah.

### Sampling procedure

Sample sizes of 66 rubber farmers were drawn from two Local Government Areas (LGAs) in the study using a multi-stage sampling procedure. Firstly, a simple random sampling technique without replacement was used to select two LGAs in the State. Secondly, a stratified sampling technique was used to select the 66 rubber rubbers for the study.

A well-structured questionnaire was utilized as an instrument for eliciting information from the population of the study. The questionnaire was structured in ways to collect data on the gender, age, marital status, farming experience, educational level, and household size of the respondents. Other information which the questionnaire was structured to gather were perceptions of farm succession planning among rubber farmers and factors that influence the attitudes of rubber farmers towards succession planning.

## Method of data analysis

Frequency and percentage were used to analyze the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents. Mean, and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Socio-economic characteristics of the respondents

Table 1 revealed socio-economic characteristics of respondents in the study. Majority (80.3%) of the rubber farmers in the study area were predominantly males, while about 19.7 were females.

**Table 1:** Socio-economic characteristics of the respondents.

Socio-economic Characteristics	Freq.	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	53	80.3
Female	13	19.7
<b>Age</b>		
25 and less	7	10.6
26-40	11	16.7
41-55	33	50.0
56 and above	15	22.7
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	6	9.1
Married	39	59.1
Divorced	9	13.6
Widowed	12	18.2
<b>Farming Experience</b>		
10 years and less	8	12.1
11-20 years	19	28.8
21-30	25	37.9
31 years and above	14	21.2
<b>Educational Level</b>		
No formal Education	21	31.8
Primary Education	28	42.4
Secondary Education	11	16.7
Tertiary Education	6	9.1
<b>Household Size</b>		
3 persons and less	17	25.8
4-6 persons	23	34.8
7-9 Persons	20	30.3
10 persons and above	6	9.1
<b>Religion</b>		
Christianity	44	66.7
Islam	14	21.2
Traditional	8	12.1

Due to the societal presumption that women will marry into another family, which promotes males to inherit farming, men dominate the industry of producing rubber. Farm succession is largely reserved for males, while females are compensated by investing in their education (Sappey *et al.*, 2012). Majority (50%) of the rubber farmers were between 41-55 years; (22.7%) of the

respondents were 56 years old and above; (16.7%) of the respondents were between 26 and 40 years, while (10.6%) of the respondents were 25 years and less. This implies that most youths do not show much interest in rubber farming and prefer white colour jobs (Musa *et al.*, 2017). This indicated that rubber farmers have advanced in age and probably need to plan for succession. This requires putting in efforts to encourage and support younger farmers to start up rubber production businesses (Adebayo *et al.*, 2020). Majorities, 50% of the respondents, are married; 37% of the respondents are single; 4% of the respondents are divorced, while 17% of the respondents are widowed. This is in line with the finding of Adeloye *et al.* (2022), which revealed that most married farmers had husbands, wives, and children, which might serve as a source of labour and potential successor(s) of the farm. The fact that a high percentage of farmers are married means that they can consult their spouse about business risks and make joint plans for when they decide to stop farming, which necessitates efforts to be made to encourage and support younger farmers to start engaging in rubber production activities (Fasina and Inegbedion, 2014).

Table 1 shows that majority (37.9%) of the rubber farmers had 21-30 years of farming experience, 28.8% of the respondents had 11-20 years of farming experience; 21.2% of the respondents had 31 and above years of farming experience, while 12.1% of the respondents had 10 years and less of farming experience. Farmers cultivating rubber have a high farming experience that would be quite adequate for improving their productivity (Osabuohein *et al.*, 2022). The rubber farmers with more years of farm experience could accumulate skills and knowledge to engage in large-scale production for higher income generation. Majority (42.4%) of rubber farmers had primary education; (31.8%) of the respondents had no formal education; (16.7%) of the respondents had secondary education, while (9.1%) of the respondents had tertiary education. This shows that majority of the respondents had a low level of education which predominates in the agricultural sector in Nigeria.

The result in (Table 1) revealed that most (34.8%) of the respondents had 4-6 persons in their household, (30.3%) of the respondents had 7-9 persons in their household; (25.8%) of the respondents had 3 persons and less in their household, while (9.1%) of the respondents had 10 persons and above in their household. This affirmed the finding of Ofuoku *et al.* (2022), which revealed that the average household size of farmers was six persons, with most (50.89%) having 7-10 persons, which is consistent with the average household size in African society. Majorities, 66.7% of the respondents, are Christians; 21.2% of the respondents are Muslims, while 12.1% of the respondents are traditionalists.

**Table 2:** Mean and Standard Deviation Scores on the Perception of Farm Succession Planning among Rubber Farmers.

S/N	Items	X	SD	Remarks
1	Succession planning is essential for the continuity of farm business	2.74	1.04	Agree
2	It helps in developing the farming skills of a potential successor	2.81	1.01	Agree
3	Succession planning is a waste of time	2.43	1.00	Disagree
4	It brings about the wastage of material resources	2.41	1.05	Disagree
5	Aged rubber farmers have a perceived intention to plan for succession for continuous income generation after retirement	2.81	1.12	Agree
6	It is a means of integrating youth into rubber farming	2.75	1.09	Agree
7	Succession planning helps in sharing responsibility with a potential successor	2.66	1.11	Agree
	Cluster Mean	2.66	1.06	Agree

**Table 3:** Mean and Standard Deviation Scores on the Farm Succession Planning Practices among Rubber Farmers.

S/N	Items	X	SD	Remarks
1	Identification of farm successor	3.01	1.09	Agree
2	Communication with the identified person about the succession plan	2.94	1.01	Agree
3	Involvement of the successor in rubber farming	2.77	1.05	Agree
4	Mentoring of the successor	2.88	1.08	Agree
5	Overseeing of activities of the successor on the farm	2.72	1.11	Agree
6	The transition of the farm to the successor	2.90	1.10	Agree
	Cluster Mean	2.87	1.07	Agree

### Perception of farm succession planning among rubber farmers

**Research Question One:** What is the perception of farm succession planning among rubber farmers in the study area?

Results in Table 2 showed that the mean scores of rubber farmers for all the items except for 3 and 4 are above the cut-off mean of 2.50, which indicated agreement with the statements. The cluster mean of 2.66 is above the cut-off mean of 2.50, which shows a positive perception of farm succession planning among rubber farmers in Delta State. The perception of farm succession planning among rubber farmers in Delta State was that it ensures the continuity of farm business, develops farming skills of potential successors, ensures continuity in income generation after retirement, promotes youth integration into rubber farming and enhances share of responsibility with a potential successor. This affirmed the finding of Arowolo *et al.* (2017), which showed that poultry farmers perceived succession planning to be a fundamental aspect of the continuation and survival of farm business, good decisions for retirement and means of smooth transition following incapacitation, retirement, and death

### Farm succession planning practices among rubber farmers

**Research Question Two:** What are the farm succession planning practices among rubber farmers in the study area?

The findings of the study presented in (Table 3) show every respondent agreed that the items were farm succession planning practices among rubber farmers because their mean scores for the items were all greater than the cut-off mean of 2.50. The cluster mean of 2.68 is above the cut-off mean of 2.50, and this show there are many farm succession planning practices among rubber farmers in Delta State. The farm succession planning practices among rubber farmers in Delta State were identification of farm successor, communication to the identified person about the succession plan, involvement of the successor in rubber farming, mentoring of the successor, overseeing of activities of successor in the farm and transition of the farm to the successor. This agreed with the finding of Falkiner *et al.* (2017), which revealed that farm succession planning practices were planning for successor identification, communicating by having conversations with the successor, providing incentives for the successor and transitioning farmland to the successor.

### Factors that influence farm succession planning among rubber farmers

**Research Question Three:** What are the factors that influence farm succession planning among rubber farmers in Delta State?

According to the findings in (Table 4), every respondent agreed that the items impacted succession planning because their mean scores for the items were all greater than the cut-off mean of 2.50. The cluster mean of 2.68 is above the cut-off mean of 2.50, and this shows many factors influence farm succession planning among rubber

**Table 4:** Mean and Standard Deviation Scores on the Factors that Influence Farm Succession Planning among Rubber Farmers.

S/N	Items	X	SD	Remarks
1	The interest of a family member in the rubber farming business	2.64	1.01	Agree
2	Age of the rubber farmers	2.77	1.11	Agree
3	The availability of resources for succession planning	2.60	1.10	Agree
4	Skills of rubber farming among family members	2.71	1.07	Agree
5	Education level of rubber farmers	2.65	1.02	Agree
6	The need to prevent future generational conflicts in the family	2.78	1.13	
7	Rubber farming experience of the potential successor	2.59	1.01	Agree
	Cluster Mean	2.68	1.08	Agree

farmers in Delta State. The factors that influence farm succession planning among rubber farmers in Delta State are the interest of a family member in the rubber farming business, the age of the rubber farmers, the availability of resources for succession planning, skills of rubber farming among family members, education level of rubber farmers, the need to prevent future generational conflicts in the family and rubber farming experience of the potential successor. This is in line with the finding of Adeloje *et al.* (2022), which revealed that stages of retirement, farming experience and levels of formal education are among the factors that influence the intention of aged farmers to have a succession plan.

## Conclusion

Based on the findings, it is concluded that most of the rural farmers in Delta State have good perception of succession planning. Majority of the rubber farmers were male, married, aged Christians with relatively high farming experience and low level of education. Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended, among others, that Delta State Government should use cooperative society, extension workers and contact farmers to educate rubber farmers on the need for succession planning. It was also recommended that Rubber Research Institute of Nigeria should organize an annual training programme for rubber farmers to enable them to engage in succession planning.

## Highlights of the Paper

The study was carried out in Delta State to gather evidence on the perception of farm succession planning among rubber farmers. The study revealed that rubber farmers have positive perceptions towards farm succession planning. Rubber farmers' farm succession planning practices were identification, communicating, mentoring, and transitioning rubber farms to successors. Several factors influence farm succession planning among rubber farmers: interest, age, resources skills and rubber farming experience of the potential successor.

The present study has contributed to the existing knowledge by shifting focus from conventional to contemporary issues in perceptions, practices and factors that influence succession planning practices among rubber farmers. The study has contributed to the body of knowledge by establishing that the continuous existence of rubber farms depends on perceptions and practice of succession planning. The existing studies were conducted in varying geographical locations and utilized different participants made of palm oil farmers, poultry farmers and crop farmers. As such, there exists a gap in knowledge. This is the gap filled by the current study, which investigated the perception of farm succession planning among rubber farmers in Delta State. Succession planning ensures smooth transitions of rubber farms to the next generation.

## Authors' Declaration

We declare that this study is an original research by our research team and we agree to publish it in the journal.

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